

PRINCIPALS' ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING (PrAC)
MINUTES
JUNE 30, 2005
9 A.M. – 2 P.M.
STATE BOARD ROOM

Sharing Local Activities

Commissioner Wilhoit welcomed personal news of note and offered best wishes to the PrAC council members regarding:

- Beth Johnson's move to Western Middle School, Franklin County
- Daneen Zimmerman's move to River Ridge, Kenton County
- Jennifer Hobbs will be moving to Hardin County as Director of Personnel

Priorities of the Kentucky Board of Education

Commissioner Wilhoit offered a brief overview of the five priorities of the KBE and highlighted the key emphasis of each priority:

- ***Refocusing High Schools:*** Re-capped Model Schools Conference held in Nashville, Tennessee on Refocusing High Schools
- ***Leadership:*** Supporting principals and preventing burn-out
- ***Early Childhood:*** Funding issues
- ***Closing the Achievement Gap:*** To be covered in this meeting
- ***Literacy:*** Carrying this initiative forward, with the goal being a reading specialist in every elementary school, funded by the state, focusing on early intervention

Closing the Achievement Gap (*Johnnie Grissom and Gary Perkins*)

Johnnie gave an overview of the current philosophical approach to closing the special education achievement gap, consisting of five components: 1) organizational and school culture, 2) processes, policies and procedures, 3) professional development designed around effective programming, 4) collaboration, and 5) targeting human and fiscal resources

Johnnie then reviewed the essential components in closing the special education achievement gap (making the strong point that you can remove the words 'special education' and have the correct prescription for closing ALL achievement gaps).

These include:

- *rigorous curriculum, effective instruction, and on-going assessment* (of all students in the school, not just special education students)
- *teacher quality and certification* (*Critical issue!* Special Education teachers don't have the necessary content knowledge. To close the gap, we must have teachers with content knowledge collaborating closely with teachers who have accommodation knowledge. In schools that have closed their gaps, special

education teachers worked closely with and helped regular education teachers with accommodations.)

- *identification and placement* (emphasis on a more effective pre-referral system)
- *accountability* (for actually closing the gap! SB 168 was a good start)
- *leadership and culture* (the culture of a learning community involving ALL children as well as a culture of high expectations for every child)

Johnnie requested feedback from the PrAC members on these 5 areas.

Gary discussed the achievement gap coordinator's efforts to focus discussions and work throughout the state on WHY gaps exist. In order to assist districts in answering this question, they have looked at culture reviews, self-guided studies, and discussed researched strategies and planning.

Regarding Gary's discussion on the achievement gap, Johnnie discussed several barriers...children's tendency to be identified in multiple categories, dispelling the myth that children with identified special needs do not have the cognitive ability to achieve, and attitudes!

Feedback Overview

- Each school level (elementary, middle and high) must be addressed differently.
- Classroom teachers need PD on working with special education students!
- Teach students to be successful outside of school.
- Special education teachers need to work with classroom teachers on accommodations.
- Classroom teachers need more help.
- Need more money for teacher's aides, so that they can help with management and teachers can teach and work with more students.
- We need more special education teachers to collaborate with classroom teachers to help them with accommodations.
- Elementary education teachers especially need more collaborative help from special education teachers.
- Special education teachers can't teach because of demands to do testing, ARC meetings, paperwork, etc.
- Can aides do more paperwork so teachers can teach?
- Minimize paperwork and change compliance to looking at results, not paperwork accountability.

Suggested Ideas

- In my school, we sent four classroom teachers to Carol Tomlinson's training on differentiation. We reorganized – all social studies classes were taught at advanced level regardless of special needs and/or disability. Learning went way up across the board! Put everyone in advanced level classes...even if grades are lower, more learning occurs and incidents of behavioral issues go down.

- Our school has provided strong support for teachers dealing with students with behavior issues (we have a team of social workers, a school psychologist, etc.) who help teachers deal with behavior immediately and then get them back into content! Behavior problems occur BECAUSE kids don't get the content.
- Look at putting some special education teacher money into providing better professional development for all teachers since special education teachers have essentially been reduced to being aides who do testing, meetings and paperwork.
- Teach ALL teachers de-escalation and targeted instructional discipline in pre-service learning programs.
- Re-think the administrative responsibilities of special education teachers.
- Go to a model of special education teachers as caseworkers collaborating with classroom teachers who know the content, and helping them with accommodations for students.
- Make sure focus of special education at elementary level is on children mastering the basic skills.
- Give special education teachers professional development in content, strategies and best instructional practices just like classroom teachers.

Proposed Changes to Kentucky's Assessment System (*Commissioner Wilhoit*)

Commissioner Wilhoit provided an overview of the changes that are on the way. The RFP will be out in August. Changes include:

- Moving to a single form matrix
- One common test taken by all students with around 30 multiple-choice items and probably 2 common open-ended response items that all children will answer.
- Multiple-choice results will be available to teachers/schools within days, and open response items will be left in the school for scoring.
- A number of feedback mechanisms will be added (vendor will be asked to give a classroom based response to the test that will come back to each teacher/principal).
- More multiple choice items and fewer open response items (3 instead of 7)
- Every child will be tested in English and language arts in grades 3-8
- Will use standard form and a consistent testing framework
- Several changes in the writing test: weight on-demand and portfolio equally, add another item to on demand with shorter time requirements (50 or 60 minutes instead of 90), add another kind of written component.
- Portfolio changes: reduce number of portfolio entries required by one at each of the grade levels, go from holistic to analytical scoring process.
- Changed focus of senior level writing piece to one directly related to each student's Individual Graduation Plan.

A brief discussion of testing online revealed some positives and barriers. Positives included kids love them! They feel less intimidated by a computer test than a paper and pencil test, so test anxiety is greatly reduced. Kids have a higher comfort level with computers. Special education children (especially those who would have had a

scribe for a paper/pencil test) love it. Barriers include problems with bandwidth, getting kicked off, and moving to a decentralized system.

Sample SBDM Policies (Steve Schenck and Cheri Meadows)

Sample SBDM policies were developed as requested and reviewed by the group through email. The policies were already posted as part of a request from the last meeting. Suggestions will be incorporated and the document reposted.

Feedback Overview

- Advisory council members are using the document and content in their schools.
- Members have found the document very helpful.
- All needs are currently being met.

Principal Certification (Steve Schenck and Barb Kennedy)

The Kentucky Principal Internship Program has been re-instated and information will be forthcoming. It is now a two-year program. The Education Professional Standards Board is the owner of the program, and the best place to get information is from their website, <http://www.kyepsb.net/>.

NEXT MEETING:
September 7, 2005